DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 798 SO 018 263

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TITLE Competencies for Living in an Interdependent World. Revised.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Education, "Schooling in an Age of Interdependence," Chapman College Education Department and the Center for Human Interdependence (5th, Orange, CA, April 26, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship Education; Cultural Awareness; *Global Approach; *Interdisciplinary Approach; International Cooperation; Social Sciences; *Social Studies; United States Government (Course); *World Affairs; World Problems
IDENTIFIERS *Global Studies; *Interdependence

ABSTRACT

New courses and programs are needed to prepare students for an interdependent world. Courses and programs in global education should be designed around four intellectual dimensions: (1) presenting substantive information from different cultural, ideological, historical, and gender perspectives; (2) exploring the values, attitudes, and positions that define our world views; (3) introducing skills and competencies that will prepare effective citizens; and (4) including activities that will involve students in community affairs. Students should possess specific skills and abilities such as understanding decision-making processes and understanding the costs and benefits of interdependence. Courses need to focus on developing research and problem-solving skills. The basic competencies of reading, writing, critical thinking, and computation are always essential. The processes which bring about societal growth and progress will be random and ineffective without well-designed educational programs. (SM)

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Competencies for Living in an Interdependent World

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Remarks prepared for presentation at the Fifth Annual Conference on Education, "Schooling in an Age of Interdependence", Chapman College Education Department and the Center for Human Interdependence. April 26, 1986.

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My purpose is to discuss with you the challenges faced by educators concerned with teaching appropriately and effectively in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. On a daily basis, we are reminded of how our well-being is influenced by decisions made in distant lands. In 1973 it was the OPEC nations' decision to band together and raise the price of oil which shocked us all. Today, it might be a decision by the European Community to restrict imports or a terrorist attack in the Middle East which causes us to change our priorities, and ultimately, these activities may influence the quality of life in our society. These issues emphasize the linkages which bind the people of this world together. Effective responses to these issues require an appreciation of their complexity and an understanding of the fact that many of our traditional ways of analysis and evaluation are no longer appropriate.

For example, consider the current U.S. policy toward Angola in Southern Africa. This country has a Marxist government which is supported by our traditional rival, the Soviet Union. During Angola's period of decolonization and revolution, the U.S. supported UNITA, a group opposed to the present government. UNITA is led by Jonas Savimbi, a Marxist who was supported by the People's Republic of China. His group is also supported by the South African government. The U.S. government has decided to give more aid to Savimbi and UNITA in order to overthrow the present Soviet supported Angolan government. To succeed, Savimbi and his followers will have to disrupt the economic and political infrastructure of Angolan society. What complicates matters is that the present government of Angola has good relations with

many U.S.-based companies. Approximately 97% of Angola's trade is with the West, including significant activity by Gulf and Chevron oil companies. The oil refineries owned by these U.S. based companies are being protected by Cuban troops from any attacks by the UNITA guerrillas. While the present administration tries to overthrow the government, U.S. business interests continue to trade with Angola in the amount of $1.1 billion in 1984; meanwhile our commercial banks and the Export-Import Bank, a government agency, continue to loan money -$450 million- to the Angolan government.

Confused? This is the nature of international affairs today. This complexity is not unique to the conflict in Angola. The dispute with our allies over the Soviet pipeline and the recent disagreements surrounding the U.S. attack on Libya provide additional examples of complex issues which challenge traditional patterns of loyalty and identification.

Situations like these are important to the well-being of all people, and our educational systems must introduce students to these complex issues and prepare them to respond in an intelligent and appropriate manner. The goals of this presentation are 1) to discuss the transformations which continue to define political, economic and sociocultural relations within and between nation-states; 2) to explore a range of skills and competencies which seem to be essential for effective and productive citizenship in a complex system; and 3) to briefly review the role educators should play in the shaping of future global conditions.

There are numerous opinions and strategies concerning how our schools should be run. There are many educators, policy-makers and parents who have specific concerns, and who want their interests represented in the school curriculum. The recommendations and information presented here are not intended to be part of an assault on teachers and the schools. Rather, many who advocate a global or international perspective in education are concerned with the preparation of teachers for teaching about a world where the relationship between domestic and international affairs is blurred, and in which conditions of interdependence and dependence challenge the assumptions of national sovereignty and independent decision-making.

Being an advocate of global or international education means more than supporting the teaching of geography, world history or area studies. It means promoting the developments of skills needed to identify relevant issues, assess the dimensions of these complex issues and initiate responses which go beyond our own interests, assumptions and values. Most of us react from our own position or our own interests, without understanding the global consequences of most conditions and events. For example, we may support protectionist policies to save jobs for U.S. auto workers; however, few of us consider how trade restrictions will affect U.S. citizens working for Honda, or the Indonesians working on the transport ship bringing automobiles to the U.S. market. Many of us, charged with teaching in international education programs, are not sensitive to the boundaries of the issues facing citizens in this world. We are not aware of how far these issues actually extend. We are also not aware of the

depth of these issues - how, for example, economic concerns are influenced by political decisions and sociocultural conditions.

We live in a world in which controversy rules. International realities and perceptions of those realities define and shape our educational responsibilities. The task of developing and implementing a curriculum which includes potentially controversial topics is a difficult one because of the number of individuals and groups who seek to control the curriculum. These groups usually seek to further their interests by providing citizenship training (socialization) based upon principles which define their view of world affairs. Justice Holmes is credited with suggesting that in any argument between two persons there are six persons involved: the two as they actually are, the two as each is seen by the other and the two as they see themselves. This multiplication of views or positions is evident in most international issue areas. However, in international affairs one must also consider the views of bystanders - the countries and their citizens not directly involved in the decision-making process. For example, when the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. decide to increase their arms expenditures, the entire world is affected by this decision. Understanding these various positions is a critical competency for life in a global age.

What are the other conditions and changes which define this global age? Increasing connections, often misidentified as examples of interdependence, represent only one of the many transformations which define our present system. These transformations influence our daily activities and we should

consider them as we develop our courses, write our texts and design our programs of study. Let us consider seven transformations and their educational implications.

1. Since 1945, many new nation-states have joined the world community through processes of decolonization and the break up of old states.

Why should this concern educators? Several ideas come to mind:

- o These countries bring new concerns, new values and traditions to the international system.
- o These countries become participants, not always by choice, in the conflict between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.
- o These countries become important as providers of products and markets. They also compete for scarce resources and opportunities in the international system.
- o Many of these countries are plagued by significant economic and political problems. These problems may result in conflicts which are certain to attract outside interests. Neighboring countries, regional powers, or the superpowers may be involved for humanitarian, commercial or political reasons.

2. The persistence of two major global problems, inequality and war, cause many citizens to challenge the effectiveness and viability of existing authority structures. The pressure for change has resulted in demands for smaller states (subnationalism) and, in some cases, pressure to create larger regional entities. (supernationalism)

Why should this concern educators?

- o A major purpose of schools is to build loyalty to a government or political authority. In some areas, this authority is being challenged.
- o Students need to be taught how to be flexible and innovative in a world in which national sovereignty, as we have known it since the Peace of Westphalia, may be obsolete.
- o Citizens have a responsibility to their society and government; however, citizens must learn how to challenge authority when it is ineffective and inappropriate.

3. A global communication system brings the world to our living rooms in just seconds. Television, radio, print media and other methods of modern communication have created a "global village."

Why should this situation concern educators?

- The global communications system has changed the whole process of decision-making. Most crisis situations are publicly broadcasted immediately and political and economic leaders are forced to make very rapid decisions.

- Television and radio signals routinely penetrate the boundaries of societies, making it difficult to control information flows.

- The proliferation of information has also resulted in challenges to political authorities and in the questioning of cultural values and traditions.

- The information available has enhanced our abilities to contribute positively to societies and to respond to problems effectively.

- The concentration of technological resources in the hands of a few governments and corporations raises the issue of "cultural imperialism."

4. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of public and private transactions between nation-states. These activities have resulted in conditions of either interdependence (mutual dependence) or dependence (reliance on external actors for goods or services). A country's independence and flexibility are restricted by interdependent or dependent relations.

Why should educators be concerned about this transformation?

- People need to be aware that no country can provide for its citizens without trading with the other countries. Self-sufficiency is impossible without drastic changes in the life-styles of most people in affluent societies.

- Conditions of interdependence and dependence can cause problems associated with ethnocentrism and racism, if cross-cultural awareness is not emphasized.

- o Interdependence and dependence provide few opportunities for zero-sum situations. Instead, these conditions encourage the politics of accommodation.

5. In international affairs, nonstate actors have increased their activities and have become more influential in international affairs.

Why should educators pay attention to these trends?

- o Many of the tools of statecraft available to nation-states are now obsolete.

- o Transnational corporations and non-governmental organizations (e.g. the Catholic Church) have become important actors and often compete with nation-states for influence and authority.

6. There has been a diffusion of power in the international system and the use of military force to influence the actions of other states has become less effective.

Why should educators be concerned?

- o Influence in the system will require an understanding of the values and priorities of other societies.

- o Diplomacy and bargaining skills will become more important in managing international affairs.

7. The international political agenda has been expanded to include "low politics," i.e., secondary issues previously relegated to domestic political affairs. These include policy issues in human rights areas, the environment, transportation, commerce and health.

Why should educators pay attention to these trans

formations?

- o Most citizens are not prepared to deal with foreign interests attempting to influence policy in domestic areas.

- o Many low politics issues are the human centric issues. They are usually in conflict with the interests of political elites who control the state.

- o Many low politics issues concern "quality of life" areas. For example, problems associated with clean air, water and adequate shelter, influence individuals in all societies.

These seven transformations partially define the international political activities of individuals, groups and governments. Special skills and competencies need to be developed which will enable citizens to respond to these major changes and to provide for the welfare of citizens throughout the international system. Our schools (kindergarten through life-long learning) should be providing training in skills and competencies which relate to each of these transformations. How should these courses be constructed? What specific skills should be emphasized?

To be intellectually defensible and academically appropriate, courses or programs in international or global education should be designed around <u>four</u> intellectual dimensions. These are:

1. A presentation of <u>substantive information</u> from a variety of cultural, ideological, historical and gender perspectives.

2. An <u>exploration</u> of the values, attitudes and positions which define our <u>worldviews</u>. These are the lenses we use to interpret international issues and events. This includes a discussion of "what is" and "what ought to be" statements.

3. The introduction of <u>skills and competencies</u> which will prepare participants for effective and productive citizenship. These skills should focus on developing strategies for the acquisition, evaluation and application of knowledge. Students should be capable of asking thoughtful questions which will enable them to gather evidence, evaluate that same evidence, draw conclusions based upon their data analysis and then act.

4. The provision of opportunities for students to use their skills and newly acquired knowledge. Even the most abstract or theoretically oriented program could be designed to include situations or exercises which encourage students to get involved in their communities and to respond to issues of community concern.

These four dimensions provide flexible parameters for any educator interested in designing an educational program for a global age. A course designed along these dimensions would also emphasize specific competencies which are essential for understanding, and for effective social, political and commercial activity in local, national and international affairs.

Fifteen such competencies are presented below:

1. Students should develop the ability to understand the decision-making processes in public organizations and agencies and in private organizations and corporations. This involves understanding how power and influence are distributed, and how to gain access to those with the authority to make decisions. It is also important that individuals understand their power in the system.

2. Students should understand both the costs and benefits of interdependence and dependence in the international system. We need to prepare our students to anticipate the antinomies of interdependence and learn how to manage and balance the various impacts of interdependence/dependence on a country's economic, political and socio-cultural development.

3. Students should learn how to plan for the present and the future. This will involve being able to identify and assess the intended and unintended consequences of our decisions and the decisions of others.

4. Students need to develop an awareness of how our class status, our ethnic or racial identity and our role in the workplace or in our community influence how we perceive and interpret events. We also need to realize how others perceive us. All of these factors influence the style and form of our actions.

5. It is important for educators to encourage students to develop a good sense of community, a social ethic or a sense of global stewardship. This is what John K.

Galbraith once described as the will to be concerned with doing things cooperatively for a larger community and not just to take comfort in doing something for oneself.

6. A commitment to encourage the critical analysis of contending perspectives or worldviews on all issues of controversy. In this complex world, educators should encourage intellectual pluralism. There are many ways of seeing and evaluating the world and we open ourselves to the discovery process by recognizing the assumptions and patterns that lie behind each way of interpreting and describing the world - especially our own.

7. We need to encourage the development of skills related to cross-cultural and comparative analysis. Students need to develop an awareness of how circumstances and events across time and across cultures may be linked. This is the ability to understand historical trends and patterns, as well as the ability to appreciate and learn from the accomplishments and failures of all cultures.

8. Related to the need for an understanding of competing worldviews, is the need to develop an information acquisition strategy which encourages the weighing of evidence from contending ideological, cultural and gender perspectives. It is our responsibility to find out as much as we can about an issue before we react. The need for a sophisticated and practical information gathering strategy is very critical.

9. Related to the need for an awareness of facts and figures is the need to develop an <u>empathy</u> for those whom the facts describe. While it is important for us to know that 50,000 people die each day due to malnutrition, and that 5 million children died in Africa in 1984, it is even more important for all of us to take responsibility for these injustices - - to develop a compassion for the victims which will motivate us to act.

10. Students need to be prepared to <u>respond effectively</u> to issues which concern the public. They need to know when and where to focus their time and energy.

11. Courses need to focus on developing <u>research skills</u> which will enable students to find their own evidence to defend or refute statements made by public officials or private citizens. These skills should help students find evidence to <u>describe</u> events, <u>explain</u>

the origin of the events, predict outcomes, and prescribe policy responses.

12. Any attempt to effectively respond to the problems and crisis situations which cut across national boundaries will require a global perspective in problem-solving. This will require exploring all policy options and considering all legitimate interests in the decision-making process. The ideal would be to reach policy solutions which do not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any individual or group of individuals.

13. In a world in which competition for goods and services will increase. Our students need to develop bargaining and decision-making skills which do not always emphasize winner-take-all outcomes or potentially dangerous competition. The politics of accommodation, in which the goal is amicable agreement and where no party is forced to compromise basic values and interests, may define local, national and international relations in future years.

14. Educational programs should help students cope with change and respond to conditions, problems and institutions which seem to persist and never change. Patience, incremental change strategies and tolerance of ambiguity are specific skills and attitudes which need to be developed.

15. Technological transformations, and the dissemination of new knowledge and new skills, will not replace the need for the basic skills of reading, writing, critical thinking and computation. Machines will not think for us. They are only tools to be used to discover more about others and about ourselves.

Educators need to develop new courses and revise existing programs to include some or all of these competencies. In any course or educational program, we can never be sure what the students do and do not learn. However, if we make a deliberate effort to emphasize these competencies in our classes, it is fair to say that our students will be prepared for 1996 and not 1956. At present, these skills will certainly help our students participate in a very complicated world.

If we are to teach these and other skills, we need to avoid

shallow, myopic and single-perspective approaches. This requires an awareness of our own limitations and a commitment to continuing professional development. We do not need any more sharing of ignorance in the classroom. Students will not be prepared for the future unless they are provided with courses which provide substantive information. Such courses must include policy and theoretical information from a variety of disciplines, since most of the problems which divide our world conform to disciplinary boundaries.

The processes of change which bring about societal growth and progress will be random and ineffective without well-defined educational programs designed by competent educators. These changes will be progressive, and can be directed toward humanitarian, political or economic goals, if our classrooms provide students with opportunities to master competencies such as those discussed in this presentation.

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August 1986 (revision)